

# The Blue Card Newsletter

VOLUME #1 - ISSUE #01  
WINTER 2018

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All of us at The Blue Card are wishing you a happy holiday season! Your generosity ensures that Holocaust survivors served by The Blue Card receive the care and attention they desperately need and deserve. As we head into cold winter days, we wanted to share some recent programming highlights, and give a sneak peek at what's ahead!

## A Word from our Executive Director, Masha Pearl

During this holiday season, we ask you to please remember the Holocaust survivors who are in dire need of financial assistance to afford the most basic necessities such as food, shelter and healthcare. Now, more than ever, as Holocaust survivors are in their late 80's, 90's and some over 100 years old, they rely greatly on the financial assistance from The Blue Card.

For the thousands of Holocaust survivors The Blue Card assists, it can also mean rising electric bills, challenging living conditions, environmental health risks and more stress. I've entered the homes of so many elderly survivors who sit in frigid surroundings for they fear that turning on the heat means a bill they can't pay or a meal they cannot afford. This is not a choice they should have to make.

*"There is still so much more we can do, so many we can help"*

So far in 2018, The Blue Card has achieved some terrific successes in our efforts to make sure as many Holocaust survivors as possible live without want or basic life necessities.

With the help of our partner social service agencies, we continue to identify and add more seniors to our support programs. Our core programs, from home care to telephone emergency response units, are working hard to fill the most needed gaps. We are continuing to train more and more medical professionals on caring for Holocaust survivors with sensitivities towards their past trauma.

There is still so much more we can do, so many more we can help.

We are so grateful to all the support you have given. What we ask of you this winter is that you tell your friends, family and colleagues about the work we are doing and how they can get involved, check on your Holocaust survivor neighbors to make sure they are well or even to say "hi" and continue to give – any amount can do so much.

## Giving Survivors a Voice in New York City

### The Blue Card joins a rally on the steps of City Hall

On May 9, The Blue Card joined NYC Council members including Rafael Espinal, the NYC Jewish Caucus, UJA-Federation of New York and others on the steps of City Hall to rally for an increased renewal of funding for the Elie Wiesel Holocaust Survivors Initiative to \$4 million in the new city budget.



Pictured Above L - Our associate executive director, Milana Hazan, spoke on behalf of the 20,000 survivors that are estimated to be living at or below the poverty line in New York to ask the city to fully fund survivors' medical, mental health and long-term healthcare needs. ([See more photos here.](#))

## Summertime Smiles

One of our favorite programs of the year is the Summer Vacation outing. This year, 40 survivors from the New York area joined our all-expense paid getaway to Oppenheimer's Regis Hotel in the Catskills. The week entailed well-planned, group-oriented activities that aimed to bring a sense of companionship and comradery. A team of our Young Leaders put together gift bags with summertime essentials.

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## The Blue Card is Full Speed Ahead!

### Running, Riding and Raising Money!

Team Blue Card is in its tenth year of partnering with premier endurance races and sporting events around the country to host charity fundraising teams, and 2018 was on track (pun intended!) to be the best yet.

- ❖ **November: TCS NYC Marathon** - our incredible team of 35 runners raised over \$150,000 for needy Holocaust survivors. This year's run was dedicated to the victims who perished in the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA.
- ❖ **January: Miami Marathon** - The Blue Card partnered with JCS Alliance of South Florida where runners raised \$42,000 – succeeding our goal of \$25,000. JCS serves more than 600 Holocaust survivors with a wide range of programs designed to help them to live at home with independence and dignity.
- ❖ **May: TD Five Boro Bike Tour** - the rain held out for cyclists to take a 40-mile recreational ride through New York City! There, Team Blue Card bested last year's fundraising total!

To donate to Team Blue Card or to invite others to donate - [click here for the Team Blue Card fundraising page](#)



## The Blue Card in the News

The Blue Card spoke with media around the country, including [Heritage Florida Jewish News](#), [Oregon Jewish Life](#) and California's [Jewish Journal](#) about how to reach out and help Holocaust survivors in your daily life, all year long. Click the links if you'd like to learn more; here are the highlights of steps you can take:

- ❖ Offer your time – a little companionship can go a long way.
- ❖ Don't underestimate the power of listening.
- ❖ Give back through activities that give you joy.
- ❖ Contribute what you can – any amount helps.

To commemorate Yom Hashoah, we talked to [JewishBoston](#) about how to speak to kids about the Holocaust, and received messages of support on social media from the editors at [Detroit Jewish News](#) and [Arizona Jewish Life](#). Also, The Blue Card's Masha Pearl wrote a compelling editorial for [The Times of Israel](#).

Blue Card recipient Lucien Padawer spoke to New Jersey newspaper [Burlington County Times](#) and news hub [NorthJersey.com](#), along with [WRNJ Radio](#) about his family's experience and story of escape during the war, and the important work being done by The Blue Card to help survivors like him.

Here is an excerpt from the **WRNJ Radio interview in the words of Holocaust survivor Lucien Padawer**: *"Without the subsidy and help of The Blue Card, I don't know what I would have done. Because I don't think you need money to be happy, but you do need to know that you can have your next dinner and that you won't sleep in the street. They are a wonderful organization. ... I wish that people who know survivors hear this and recommend Blue Card. ... I am moved. It is so enriching to understand what it is to be giving and to be receiving without envy and without resentment."*

## Helping Survivors Age in Home Remains Top Priority

Our goal is to ensure that Holocaust survivors remain safely in their homes as long as possible. This year, we have been able to add 30 new people to the In-Home Care Service Program, **now aiding 122 survivors in 20 states**. Most of the survivors we serve live on their own and/or cannot leave their homes without assistance. Our aim is to provide the resources that enable them to live

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independently, in safety and comfort, without the fear of institutionalization. Services we provide range from home health aides, companion care, meal preparation and medication management to transportation to medical appointments and housekeeping.

## By the Numbers

- ❖ We again received a **4-star** rating from nonprofit evaluator [Charity Navigator](#)! This is the highest honor they bestow.
- ❖ The Blue Card is now assisting Holocaust survivor households in **35 states**, up from 32 last year.
- ❖ The Blue Card is now working with **170 Jewish Family Services**, up from 150 last year.

## On the Horizon

Our **Annual Benefit Gala** will take place in Spring of 2019. At the event, we will present the **inaugural Elie Wiesel Memorial Award**, in honor of the late Nobel Peace Prize laureate, human rights activist and Holocaust survivor. We are working on securing another breathtaking venue. Stay tuned for upcoming details.

## The Blue Card's Young Leaders Reach New Heights

At The Blue Card, we love hearing how our former Young Leadership honorees are continuing to make a difference in the world. **Sara Greenberg**, The Blue Card's first recipient of the Young Leadership Award, was named as the Advisor to the Prime Minister of Israel for World Communities.

The Young Leadership Award was presented to Sara by Dr. Ruth K. Westheimer at the 79th annual Blue Card Gala in New York in 2013. As a grandchild of Holocaust survivors, she was immediately attracted to The Blue Card's mission. Having been involved with The Blue Card since 2010, she plays a pivotal role in raising funds and awareness. This includes running the NYC Marathon and the Jerusalem Marathon on The Blue Card's charity fundraising team.

Sara, originally from Philadelphia, has lived and worked in New York, Hong Kong, Beijing and Tel Aviv in roles spanning corporate strategy, venture capital and social finance. Prior to this new role, she was in an elite intelligence unit in the Israel Defense Forces. Sara has worked with various other nonprofit organizations focused

on Holocaust education and genocide prevention throughout her life, including the Anti-Defamation League, the USC Shoah Foundation and Taglit-Birthright Israel. Sara completed her undergraduate studies in economics at Yale University and received a joint master's degree in business administration and public policy from Harvard's Kennedy School and Business School.

In her final semester at Yale, as part of a project for a class taught by Dr. Westheimer, Sara produced a documentary short, *B-2247: A Granddaughter's Understanding*, about her grandparents' experience in Eastern Europe during the Holocaust. The film was inspired by a family trip to the hometowns of her maternal grandparents, and made Sara determined to share her grandparents' story of survival.

To watch Sara's film *B-2247: A Granddaughter's Understanding*, go to: <http://www.b2247thefilm.org>

To learn more about Young Leadership Committee, visit: <http://bluecardfund.org/young-leadership.html>



## Year Two Underway of Groundbreaking Sensitivity Training for Medical Professionals

The Blue Card was honored to have been selected to receive a grant, for the second year in a row, from the **Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA)** to provide *Person Centered-Trauma Informed Care* which educates dental, medical and hospital professionals through face-to-face workshops, webinars and teleconferencing sessions. In recent months, we've met with healthcare providers from NYU College of Dentistry Program for Survivors of Torture, Coney Island Hospital and Metropolitan Hospital. We hope this effort helps to educate them to recognize the

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specialized needs of survivors. The personnel with whom survivors interact usually have no, or limited knowledge of their past, nor are they aware of the stress that a visit to a dentist or doctor presents. This lack of understanding creates a greater threat to the health of the survivor who may avoid essential preventative care or treatment.

## The Blue Card – Siggie B. Wilzig “Fighting Cancer Together” Program

In January 2013, The Blue Card, in partnership with Sherry Wilzig Izak, introduced The Siggie B. Wilzig, Z”L “Fighting Cancer Together” Program, designed specifically to alleviate the plight of survivors who are suffering from cancer. Recent studies have shown that Holocaust survivors are not only 3 times more likely to suffer from cancer than members of the same age group within the general population but are also more likely to die from the disease. As researcher Micha Barchana of the University of Haifa points out, “...malnutrition and near-starvation are responsible for the cancer legacy...” This is further illustrated by the case of Mr. B, one of the survivors receiving Blue Card assistance. Mr. B was born in Rezina, Moldova in 1927. When the Nazi’s invaded, Mr. B and his family were forced to flee their home eventually reaching Zugdidi, Georgia. Hunger, pneumonia, and other problems such as absence of medication at the time of evacuation, continue to affect Mr. B’s health condition today as he suffers from prostate cancer as well as numerous other medical problems including hypertension, chronic kidney failure, anemia, arthritis, shortness of breath, and cardiac disease.

In light of these circumstances, The Siggie B. Wilzig, Z”L “Fighting Cancer Together” Program seeks to ensure that survivors suffering from cancer have access to the aid that they need, in order to successfully battle this dreadful disease, by covering the medical co-pays as well as the transportation and dietary costs that cancer stricken survivors may incur:

- ❖ **Medical co-pays:** Many survivors are living either on the edge of or in poverty and cannot afford to cover the high cost of medical expenses not covered by their insurance and Medicaid. By covering their co-pays The Siggie B. Wilzig Program ensures that survivors do not have to worry about being able to afford a visit to a specialist or having access to necessary cancer treatment medication
- ❖ **Transportation:** Often times these elderly survivors are forced to deal with paratransit companies whose lack of reliability and promptness only add to their already high level of stress. The Siggie B. Wilzig Program allows The Blue Card to provide survivors with paid

transportation to guarantee timely appointments and aid those who are no longer able to use public transportation.

- ❖ **Nutritional needs:** Cancer stricken survivors have special dietary and vitamin needs that need to be met in order to ensure that they remain well enough to continue battling their illness. These vitamins and nutritional supplements, such as Ensure, are generally not covered by insurance and funding from

The Siggie B. Wilzig Program helps to ensure that survivors have access to these much-needed supplements.

*“My father was an incredibly generous man. His desire to help others trumped his desires for success and greater wealth and I hope to follow in his footsteps, continuing his mission to help those less fortunate, which is why I am thrilled to see this program come to fruition,”* explains Izak.

We remain grateful for your continued support of The Siggie B. Wilzig, Z”L “Fighting Cancer Together” Program, to make a donation, please follow this link:

<http://bluecardfund.org/donate.html>

## Follow @TheBlueCard on Social Media

Make sure to visit us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) and hit those Like and Follow buttons! We’re on a campaign to increase our followers, so please spread the word to your friends and colleagues. And if you see something you like, we’d love if you retweet or share our posts!